

8TH INTERNATIONAL WILDLAND FIRE CONFERENCE

GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLES:

Towards an International
Framework

Porto - Portugal | **May 16-19th**, 2023

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Auditing Wildland Fire Management

Perspectives from the United States



An Auditor's Perspective

- Findings: criteria, condition, cause, effect  Recommendations
- Efficiency and effectiveness
- Performance metrics
- Not prescriptive—examine planning and process not dictate policy outcomes



Source: GAO file photo. | www.gao.gov

Auditing Wildfire Can Be Tricky

- Multiple agencies
- Multiple levels of government
- Some activities plannable, others are emergency response
- Interrelated program components (preparedness, fuels, suppression)
- Low probability, high risk
- Professional judgment plays critical role

GAO Has Reviewed Many Wildfire Issues

- Recruiting and retaining federal firefighters
- Containing suppression costs
- Aviation contracting
- Fuels reduction/prescribed fire
- Budget development
- Collaboration with nonfederal partners
- Wildfire smoke (federal fire agencies & EPA)
- Post-fire recovery (FEMA)

Cohesive Strategy

- Multiple reports, spanning more than a decade ([GAO-99-65](#), [GAO-05-147](#), [GAO-06-671R](#), [GAO-09-877](#))
- Recommendation evolved over time; reflecting both agencies' and GAO's growing awareness of interconnected elements and that intermediate steps needed (LANDFIRE, FPA)
- Congress passed the FLAME Act in 2010, directing the agencies to develop a cohesive strategy consistent with GAO's recommendations
- Agencies released a [cohesive strategy](#) document (2014)
- Implementation ongoing

Barriers to Recruiting and Retaining Federal Firefighters ([GAO-23-105517](#))



Source: GAO analysis of information from the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior and selected nonfederal stakeholders. | GAO-23-105517

- Descriptive report (no recommendations)
- Provide Congress with timely information on ongoing multiple agency actions
- Talked to agency officials and a sample of 16 stakeholder organizations
- Expand discussion beyond pay issues

Disaster Resilience Framework

- Emerging framework ([GAO-20-100SP](#)), based heavily on reviewing response to disasters such as hurricanes and floods
- Nation's approach to wildfire is different than for other disasters
- Framework examines all level of government and private sector (not just federal)

Disaster Resilience Framework

Principles for Analyzing Federal Efforts to Facilitate and Promote Resilience to Natural Disasters



Disaster Resilience Framework



Source: GAO-21-275SP | GAO-22-105688

Do decision makers know where structures and lives are at greatest fire risk?

Is there an overarching strategic vision? What role do various levels of government play, and how do they reconcile their different responsibilities?

Are there ways to better align incentives related to development in fire-prone areas (e.g., incentives for states and localities to adopt stronger building codes and zoning)?

GAO Wildfire-Related Reports

- Wildland Fire: Barriers to Recruitment and Retention of Federal Wildland Firefighters ([GAO-23-105517](#))
- Wildfire Smoke: Opportunities to Strengthen Federal Efforts to Manage Growing Risks ([GAO-23-104723](#))
- Wildland Fire: Federal Agencies' Efforts to Reduce Wildland Fuels and Lower Risk to Communities and Ecosystems ([GAO-20-52](#))
- Disaster Resilience Framework: Principles for Analyzing Federal Efforts to Facilitate and Promote Resilience to Natural Disasters ([GAO-20-100SP](#))

GAO Fire-Related Reports

- Wildfire Disasters: FEMA Could Take Additional Actions to Address Unique Response and Recovery Challenges ([GAO-20-5](#))
- Wildland Fire Risk Reduction: Multiple Factors Affect Federal-Nonfederal Collaboration, but Action Could Be Taken to Better Measure Progress ([GAO-17-357](#))
- Wildland Fire Management: Agencies' Efforts to Assess Program Effectiveness and Modernize the Firefighting Aviation Fleet ([GAO-16-217T](#))
- Wildland Fire Management: Federal Agencies Have Taken Important Steps Forward, but Additional, Strategic Action is Needed to Capitalize on Those Steps ([GAO-09-877](#))

GAO Fire-Related Reports

- Wildland Fire Management: Federal Agencies Have Taken Important Steps Forward, but Additional, Strategic Action is Needed to Capitalize on Those Steps ([GAO-09-877](#))
- Wildland Fire Management: Update on Federal Agency Efforts to Develop a Cohesive Strategy to Address Wildland Fire Threats ([GAO-06-671R](#))
- Wildland Fire Management: Important Progress Has Been Made, but Challenges Remain to Completing a Cohesive Strategy ([GAO-05-147](#))
- Western National Forests: A Cohesive Strategy is Needed to Address Catastrophic Wildfire Threats ([GAO-RCED-99-65](#))



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